



Case report

A case of a serial sexual offender: The first ever report from Turkey

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ABSTRACT

There have been cases of serial sexual offenders and studies dealing with such cases in the literature. However, no serial sexual offender case was reported in Turkey, to the best of our knowledge. In this article, as the first report from Turkey, we present a serial sexual offender who assaulted 27 women. The assailant entered a total of 29 houses, and assaulted victims in 27 of them, and he failed to assault two individuals. The 'modus operandi' of the offender was identical in all assault cases and led the police towards a hypothesis that these assaults were all committed by the same individual. The offender did not admit the assaults and strictly refused a forensic psychiatric examination. Being an individual with a high level of education, having a respected position and profession, choosing women aged older than 18 years as victims were among distinctive features of the presented offender.

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1. Introduction

Crimes against sexual integrity are sexual behaviours committed without consent of the targeted person. Sexual behaviours against a person, whose consent is invalid because of being at a low age and suffering from mental disabilities, are also considered in this context.^{1,2} Sexual crimes directed against children as victims is described as child sexual abuse while it is defined as sexual assault when committed against an adolescent or adult.^{3–5} It has been reported that a considerable number of assault sexual cases are not disclosed by victims because of certain factors. Therefore, the exact frequency of cases of sexual violence is considered to be much higher than reported.^{6–8}

The term 'serial sexual offender' describes offenders who have three or more victims in a sequence using acts of sexual behaviour. There have been cases of serial sexual offenders and studies dealing with such cases in the literature. However, no serial sexual offender case was reported in Turkey, to the best of our knowledge. In this article, as the first report from Turkey, we present a serial sexual offender who assaulted 27 women, which shows a number of distinctive characteristics, such as the offender with a high level of education, having a respected position and profession, and choosing women aged older than 18 years as victims.

2. Case history

There were 27 reports of sexual assault by the same offender between June 2009 and October 2010, in a Hatay province. It was noticed that the assaults occurred between 01:00 am and 05:00 am. The assailant entered a total of 29 houses, and assaulted victims in 27 of them, and he failed to assault two individuals. Balcony doors and windows were used for entering houses that were investigated after the complaints. Scene investigations revealed that the perpetrator cut off power supply connection of these houses and broke some of the closed doors or windows. According to the victims' statements, the offender had a knife or a gun and warned the victims by closing their mouth and threatened them with murder. In some cases, the offender slapped or punched the victims, the physical violence by the offender was restricted only to this. The offender ran away after leaving his blank cartridge gun and knife in a few houses. In four cases of assault, the offender entered the victim's room after locking the doors of other family members. After threatening them, the offender warned the victims that he would not rape them and he just wanted to kiss and touch their bodies. The 'modus operandi' of the offender was identical in all assault cases and led the police towards a hypothesis that these assaults were all committed by the same individual. A relative of one of the victims chased the offender and notified to the police the plate number of the car of the escaping offender. Thereafter, following the last two assaults on the same night, police force identified the location of the car and the offender was detained. Six

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of the victims identified the offender, four of them identified the offender from his picture without facing him. Eight cases expressed that the detained was the possible offender. The assailant was sent to court after the DNA of the offender matched with the biological samples obtained from the examination of the victims.

3. Characteristics of victims

The 27 victims were all women and ages of victims ranged between 18 and 73. Two victims were 18 years old, and four victims were over 65 years. Four victims were estranged from their husbands; one of them was living alone and others were living with their families. The husbands of 13 victims were at home during the assault. Eleven victims were staying with other family members during the event. Four unmarried victims were staying with their parents. Among victims from the geriatric age group, two were alone at home, while the others were staying with their children and grandchildren in the same house. Sexual penetration was not described in any of cases; however, kissing, touching, fondling and interfeemoral intercourse were reported. The DNA profile extracted from biological samples obtained during examination of five victims was matched with the DNA profile of the offender.

4. The profile of the offender

The offender, a 41-year-old male, was married and had two children. He was a teacher for 18 years. He was known as a responsible man and he was respected in his social and professional life. He had no previous medical history for psychiatric disorders or psychological problems. His wife was a nurse and the family did not have any domestic problems. In addition, the offender had an extramarital affair with another woman. In two cases, the offender introduced himself, to victims, as a policeman. He stated that he knew only two of the victims before the assault. He refused the accusation about him and claimed that he did not enter any home. Furthermore, the offender expressed that he did not commit any kind of sexual behaviour against a woman except his wife. The offender was a social alcohol user and he never used a substance before.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Young adults, frequently those between 16 and 19 years of age, have been reported to be the most common population who are subjected to sexual assault. The perpetrators are reported to be usually a person from a familiar environment.^{9,10}

In Turkey, previously conducted studies have revealed that victims were mostly aged between 11 and 18 years, and the perpetrators were mostly non-relative acquaintance of victims.^{11–13} A previous study by our team in the same region revealed that 86.6% of victims of sexual assault were aged ≤ 18 years.¹⁴ However, in contrast to the literature, in the present case, only two victims were 18 years old, while the remaining were over 20 years and the offender was unknown to the victims. In the presented case, no offence against children and adolescents under 18 years of age and the elderly was noticed.

The frequency of sexual assault cases is known to be higher than that reported in the literature. The victims sometimes may be reluctant to disclose and conceal the assault because of secrecy, self-blame, fear from the perpetrator, fear of being accused and possible social consequences of disclosure. Thus, a considerable number of cases delayed or failed to disclose the sexual assault.^{7,8} By contrast, in the presented case, all victims notified the police regarding the assault. The majority of the victims were living with family members. The presence of certain similar reports from the

same province might be a facilitating factor for disclosure by all victims. On the other hand, there still might be victims concealing the assault because of the above-mentioned factors.

The examination of sexual assault victims within a short period of time following the assault is of high importance in terms of obtaining reliable evidence of assault.^{15–17} In the presented case, biological samples belonging to the offender were obtained during the examination of victims in a short period of time. The assailant was arrested after the DNA of the offender matched with the profile extracted from the biological samples obtained from the examination of the victims. Therefore, the case was solved by police investigation, DNA matching and recognition of the perpetrator by the victims.

In a number of studies, the offenders were reported to be familiar to the victims.^{18–24} However, in this case, the offender was not known by any of the victims before the assault. Another peculiar point was that the assailant entered homes by opening or breaking door/windows without ensuring if there was anyone else present or not. At the beginning, the motivation of the offender to committing these assaults was considered to be a strong sexual impulse. However, being married and the presence of an extramarital affair might exclude this explanation. No penetration or rape attempt was reported by any of victims; furthermore, during the assault the offender had stated that kissing and touching victims' bodies was his only desire. Therefore, explaining a certain motivation of the offender seems to be impossible; yet, it might be to feel that he had the strength to achieve all that he desired, as in most similar cases. However, since the offender did not admit the assaults and strictly refused a forensic psychiatric examination/interview, the motivation for the assaults and the choice of victims over 18 years of age remains unclear.

In conclusion, being an individual with high a level of education, having a respected position and profession, choosing women aged older than 18 years as victims, excluding females under 18 years of age and elderly ones, performing the same 'modus operandi' for all assaults and not being willing to perform penetration were distinctive features of the presented offender.

Conflict of interest

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Ethical approval

None declared.

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